CHAPTER 10 『THE BEST TEAM IN THE WORLD』

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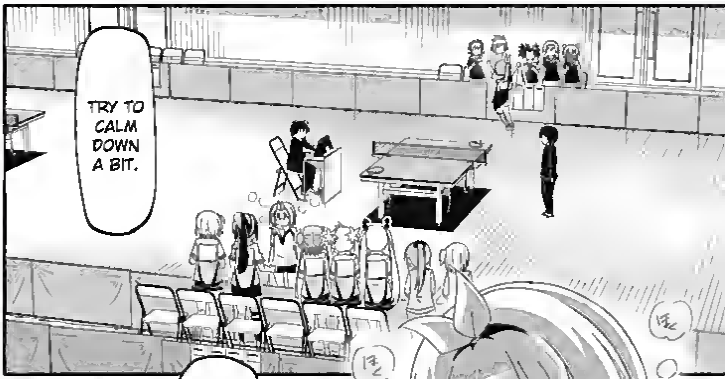
Tsubame
Suzume-gahara

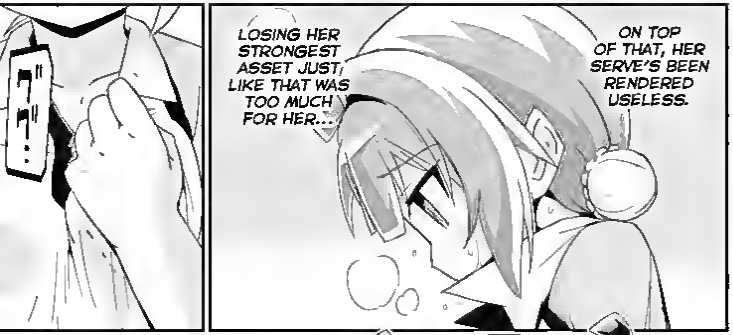

TRY TO CALM DOWN A BIT.

NOW, ABOUT THAT MIDDLE ATTACK ..

...

HAA
YOU'RE HITTING THE BALL TOO EARLY OUT OF ANXIETY.
HAH
HAA

HOKUTO HAD THE LEAD AT THE BEGINNING THANKS TO HER SERVES, BUT SHE GOT DRIVEN INTO A CORNER ON THE SECOND HALF BECAUSE OF THE OPPONENT'S MIDDLE ATTACKS.
NOW TSUBAME IS IN COMPLETE CONTROL OF THE GAME.


ON TOP OF THAT, HER SERVE'S BEEN RENDERED USELESS.
LOSING HER STRONGEST ASSET JUST, LIKE THAT WAS TOO MUCH FOR HER...

ONE MORE GAME AND HOKUTO LOSES THE MATCH.
IS THERE REALLY NO WAY OUT OF THIS BIND?
THERE'S STILL A WAY!

HOKUTO-SAN STILL HAS ONE LAST RESORT!
KOYORI?
AH
THAT SERVE!
YOU'RE RIGHT! THERE'S STILL A CHANCE!
THAT'S IT!
HOKUTO-SAN.
...
THAT SERVE SHE PRACTICED DURING THE TRAINING CAMP!
WITH THAT SHE MIGHT BE ABLE TO REVERSE THE FLOW OF THE GAME!

THAT SERVE IS STILL INCOM-PLETE...
I CAN'T USE IT IN SUCH AN IMPORTANT MATCH.

SORRY.

IT'S OKAY.
HOKU-TO.

EH?

4TH GAME, BEGIN!

I'LL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO WIN THIS.
DON'T WORRY ... JUST WATCH ME.

INCOM-
PLETE?
I THOUGHT SHE HAD MASTERED IT ALREADY,
AT LEAST IT LOOKED THAT WAY TO ME.
SHE'S FEELING UNDER PRES-SURE.
SHE MIGHT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO EXECUTE IT DURING TRAINING, BUT NOW THERE'S ALSO A BIG PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTOR TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT.
IT'S NORMAL TO HESITATE AT A TIME LIKE THIS
WHAT'S MORE, HOKUTO LOOKS LIKE SHE'S REALLY SET ON WINNING THIS MATCH. THAT ONLY INCREASES THE PRESSURE SHE'S FEELING.
USING AN UNTESTED MOVE IN THIS SITUATION
WOULD TAKE AN IMMENSE AMOUNT OF COURAGE.

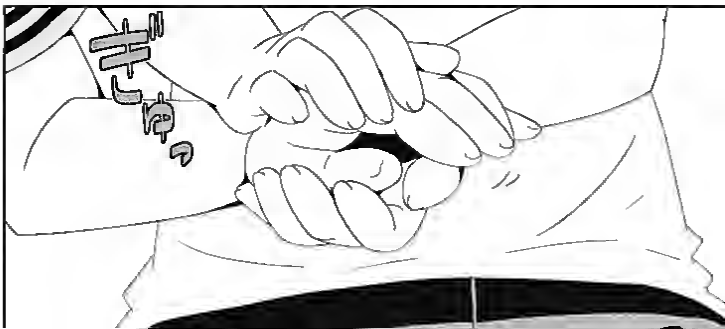
PRES-
SURE
...
3 2 1 1
(HOKUTO)
I - ナ
(IROKI)
HAA
HAH
HAA
HAH
HAA
HAA
HAH
HAA
IN THAT CASE...
SHE MIGHT BE ABLE TO USE IT,
IF WE CAN ENCOU-RAGE HER SOMEHOW, RIGHT?
旋風
...!

THERE'S SOMEBODY WHO'S ALWAYS PRACTICING WITH HOKUTO-SAN
AND WHO KNOWS HER BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE...
RIGHT, HANA-CHAN?
THERE'S GOT TO BE SOME-THING YOU CAN DO
SOMETHING THAT WILL GIVE HOKUTO-SAN THE STRENGTH SHE NEEDS!
...!
...
M-ME?

I agree.
You were helping her during the whole training camp. If somebody can do it, it's you.
BUT ...
WHAT COULD I DO FOR HER NOW?
I JUST LOST AN IMPORTANT MATCH AND PUT PRESSURE OVER THE WHOLE TEAM...
...
AW, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD! HOW LONG ARE YOU GOING TO MOPE LIKE THAT?
むにに?
IF YOU'RE BLAMING YOURSELF FOR LOSING THE MATCH YOU BETTER STOP THAT RIGHT NOW!
WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?! ARE WE THAT UNRELIABLE?!
ずいっ
WE'RE ALL HERE WITH YOU. THE CAPTAIN, MUNEMUNE-SENPAI, ME AND KOYORI.
IF A TEAMMATE HAS A SETBACK, THE REST OF US WILL COVER FOR THEM WITH ALL WE'VE GOT.

TO BE A TEAM.
THAT'S WHAT IT MEANS

IT'S YOUR TURN TO GIVE YOUR SUPPORT TO HOKUTO, AS HER TEAMMATE.
NOW ...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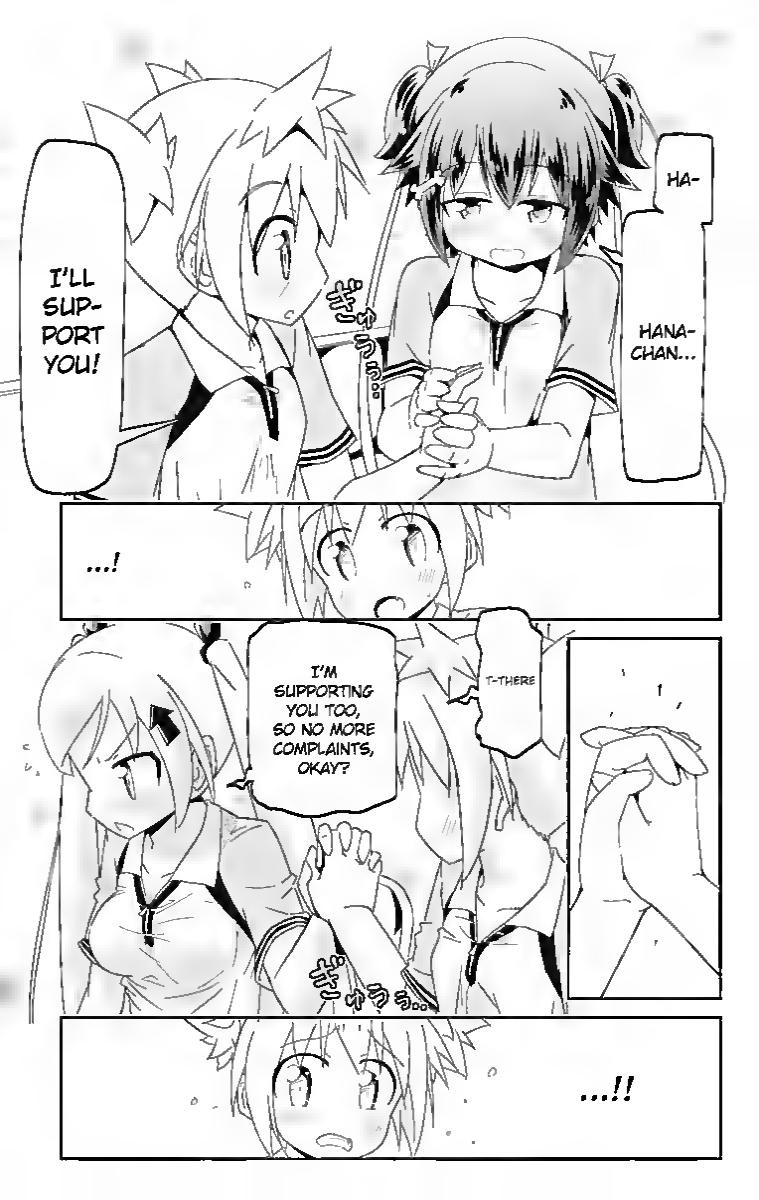
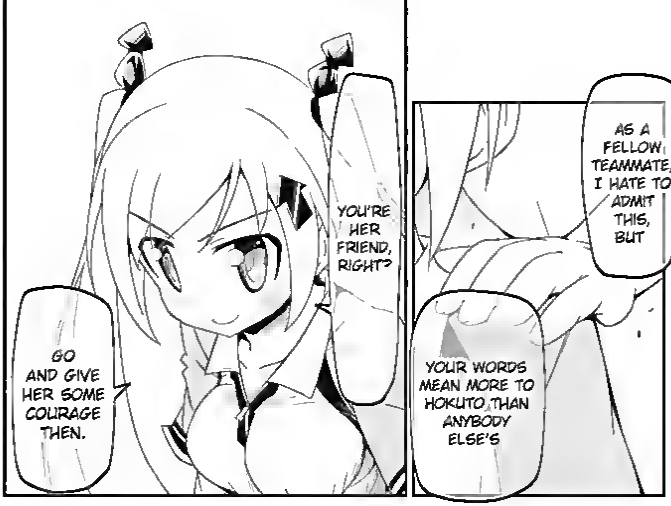

HA-
HANA-CHAN...
I'LL SUP-PORT YOU!
ぎゅっ...
...!
T-THERE
I'M SUPPORTING YOU TOO, SO NO MORE COMPLAINTS, OKAY?
ぎゅっ...
...!!


AS A FELLOW TEAMMATE, I HATE TO ADMIT THIS, BUT
YOUR WORDS MEAN MORE TO HOKUTO THAN ANYBODY ELSE'S
YOU'RE HER FRIEND, RIGHT?
GO AND GIVE HER SOME COURAGE THEN.

ぎゅうぅぅ..
OKAY...
OKAY!
EVERY-ONE ...

5
2
1
1
Tsubame
Suzume gahara
LOOKS LIKE THAT GIRL HAS NO MORE TRICKS UP HER SLEEVE THIS MATCH IS OVER.
THE GAME IS FIVE TO ONE.
HERE,
IT'S YOUR SERVE.
※ THE SERVER ALTERNATES EVERY TWO POINTS.
THAT'S TWO STRAIGHT VICTORIES FOR US.
AM I JUST GOING TO KEEP GIVING OUT SERVES I KNOW WON'T WORK?
WHAT CAN I DO NOW?

IN THIS STATE I'M IN...
I'D PROBABLY JUST...
I COULD RISK USING THAT SERVE.
BUT...
I'D JUST...
HO-KUTO!
出雲
東京
雀ヶ原

IT'S OKAY! GO FOR IT!
WE PRACTICED THAT SERVE SO MUCH!
YOU CAN DO IT! YOU'LL GET IT RIGHT!
I KNOW YOU WILL!
YOUR BEST FRIEND IN THE WORLD IS GIVING YOU HER WORD!
DON'T OVER-THINK IT!
JUST GIVE IT YOUR ALL AND

SHOOT IT!
HANA...BI...
HANABI...
HANABI!

WHEN I WAS ABOUT TO BREAK, IT WAS HER CHEERFUL VOICE THAT MADE ME HANG ON.
SEEING HANABI SO FULL OF ENERGY IS WHAT ALLOWED ME TO ENDURE ALL OF THAT RIGOROUS TRAINING.
MORE
MORE
MORE!

LET ME HEAR YOUR VOICE.
THAT'S ALL I NEED.
IF I HAVE JUST THAT
I CAN DO
ANY-THING!

...?!
SHE'S... CHANGED?
SOME-THING'S COMING!

I CAN DO
ANY-THING!
MY SERVE ...

!!
SHE THREW IT
ALL THE WAY UP!
CAN FLY
WITH NO BOUNDS!

THAT'S A...
HIGH TOSS SERVE!

(HOKUTO)
2 - 5
(IRORI)
SH-
SHE DID IT!
HOKUTO'S TRUMP CARD...
THE HIGH TOSS SERVE!

The higher the ball is thrown, the more powerful the serve will be!
THROWING THE BALL HIGHER THAN A CONVENTIONAL TOSS MAKES IT REACH A HIGHER SPEED AT DESCENT, MEANING THE IMPACT WITH THE RACKET WILL BE STRONGER.
BY MAKING USE OF THIS ADDITIONAL ENERGY YOU CAN ADD MORE SPEED AND SPIN TO YOUR SERVE.
HIGH TOSS
NORMAL TOSS
IF HOKUTO'S WEAK POINT WAS THAT HER SERVES HAD WEAK SPIN,
THE HIGH TOSS MORE THAN COMPENSATES FOR THAT!
THE STROKE ITSELF IS THE SAME AS IN A NORMAL SERVE,
BUT ITS POWER IS AMPLIFIED BY THE FALL!

IT'S ALMOST AS IF
SHE'S CASTING A MAGIC SPELL ON THE BALL.

HER REGULAR SERVE
IS TRANS-FORMED INTO A KILLER ONE!!

JUST FOR A MOMENT,
HOKUTO BECOMES AN INVINCIBLE MAGICIAN!
ほくと魔法少女ver
Hokuto-san Magical Girl

ONE MAGIC SERVE FRESH OUT OF THE OVEN.
WATCH OUT, IT'S STEAMING HOT.
ほっ
パコーン
パコーン
パコーン
THE HIGH TOSS IS VERY COM-PLEX.
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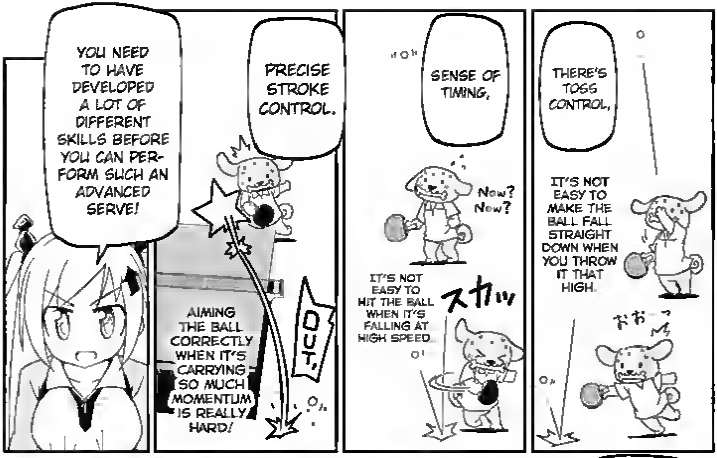
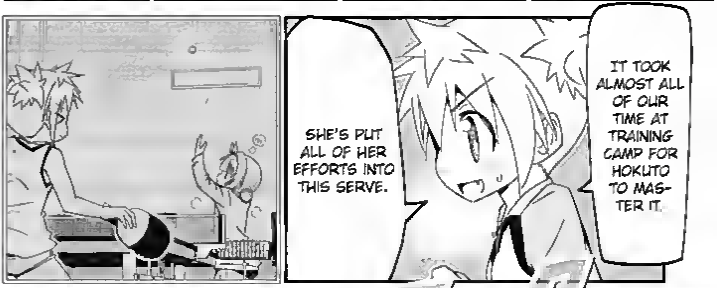
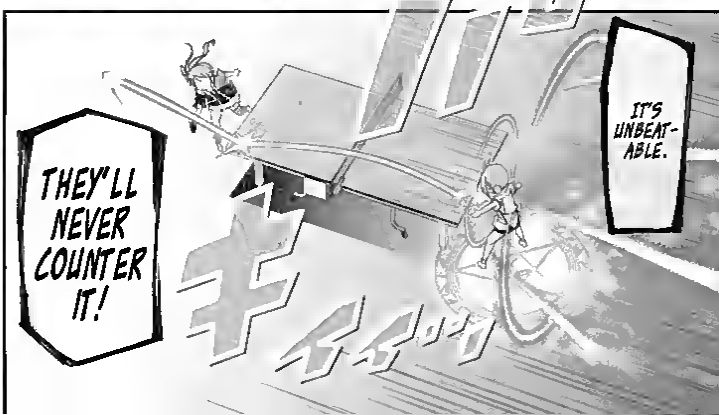
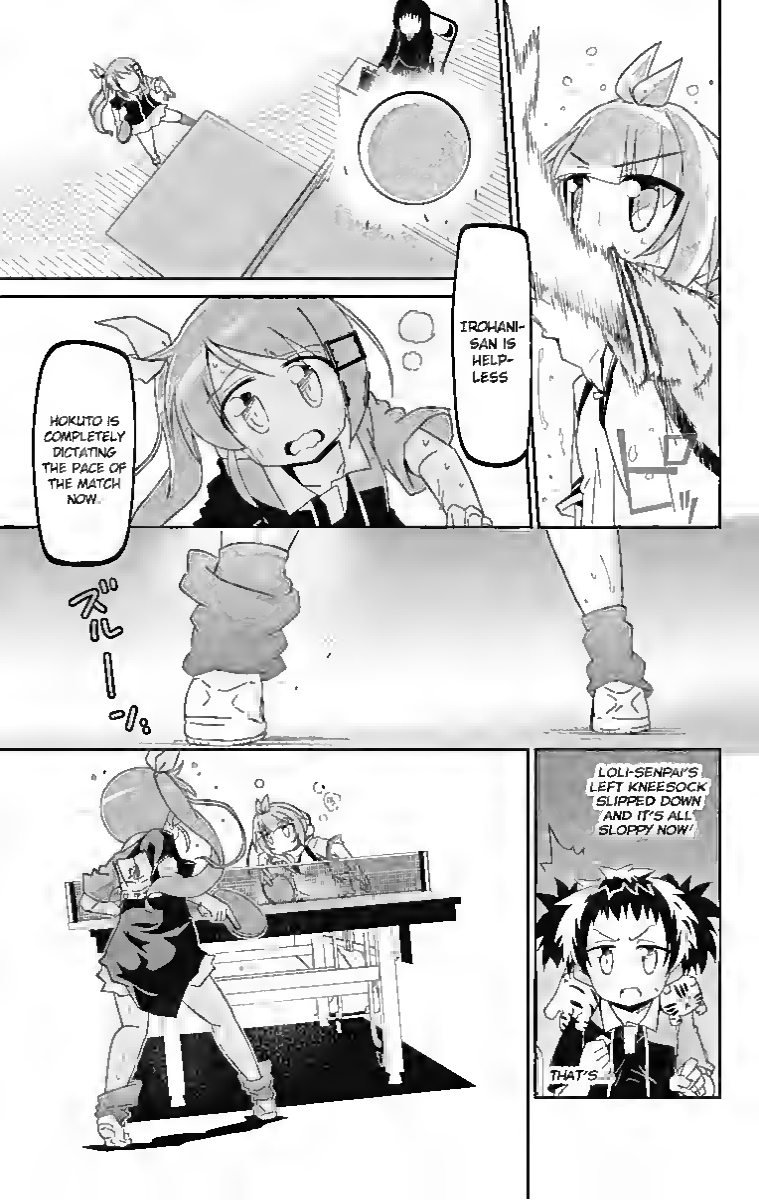

YOU NEED TO HAVE DEVELOPED A LOT OF DIFFERENT SKILLS BEFORE YOU CAN PERFORM SUCH AN ADVANCED SERVE!
PRECISE STROKE CONTROL.
AIMING THE BALL CORRECTLY WHEN IT'S CARRYING SO MUCH MOMENTUM IS REALLY HARD!
DUD
SENSE OF TIMING,
Now? Now?
IT'S NOT EASY TO HIT THE BALL WHEN IT'S FALLING AT HIGH SPEED.
スカッ
THERE'S TOSS CONTROL,
IT'S NOT EASY TO MAKE THE BALL FALL STRAIGHT DOWN WHEN YOU THROW IT THAT HIGH.
おっ


SHE'S PUT ALL OF HER EFFORTS INTO THIS SERVE.
IT TOOK ALMOST ALL OF OUR TIME AT TRAINING CAMP FOR HOKUTO TO MASTER IT.


THEY'LL NEVER COUNTER IT!
IT'S UNBEATABLE.
ドカッ!!

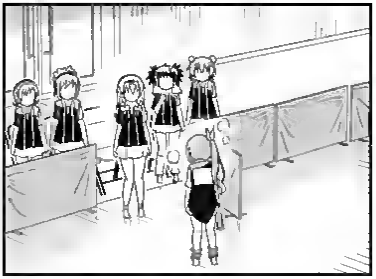
ONLY ONE GAME TO GO!
SEE? THE MATCH IS EVEN AGAIN THANKS TO THE SERVE!
9 2 1 11
THIS SERVE IS TOO MUCH! NOT ONLY DID SHE IMPROVE HER WEAK SPIN, BUT THE BALL IS ALSO FASTER NOW!
IF SHE KEEPS THIS UP...
THERE'S NO WAY I'LL BE ABLE TO COUNTER IT!
BUT...
THAT'S NO EXCUSE.

I CAN'T LOSE!
I STILL HAVE...
埴
女学園
京
MY ESTOC!
...
THE FLOW OF A GAME STARTS WITH THE SERVE.
IF WELL EXECUTED, IT INFLUENCES EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS AFTERWARDS.
SHE'S STARTING TO MAKE MISTAKES EVEN DURING THE RALLIES!
HER MIDDLE ATTACKS ARE BECOMING LESS OF A THREAT!


IROHANI-SAN IS HELP-LESS
HOKUTO IS COMPLETELY DICTATING THE PACE OF THE MATCH NOW.
ズルーッ
LOLI-SENPAI'S LEFT KNEESOCK SLIPPED DOWN AND IT'S ALL SLOPPY NOW!
THAT'S...

SINGLES 2
WINNER ITSUMO HOKUTO (SUZUMEGAHARA MIDDLE SCHOOL)
GAME AND MATCH TO ITSUMO!
11-6
5-11
ITSUMO 3 (3-11) 2 IROHANI
11-9
11-7

WHAT A COME-BACK!
SHE DID IT!

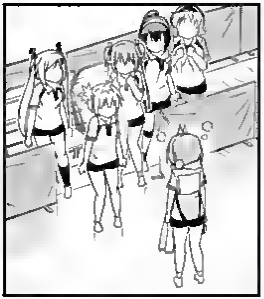


HAA
HAH
HAA

...
I'M SORRY.
HAH
HAH
HAH
I WAS COMPLETELY DWARFED BY HER SERVE AT THE ENDGAME.
IF IT WASN'T FOR THAT I'D...
ぎゅ...
IT WAS A SPLENDID MATCH.
NO ONE COULD EVER CRITICIZE YOU FOR SUCH A WONDERFUL GAME.
...!
ぎゅう

LOOKS LIKE A SPECIAL LESSON IS IN ORDER.
BUT IF YOU ALREADY UNDERSTAND WHAT CAUSED YOUR DEFEAT,
NOW WE NEED TO MAKE SURE YOU DON'T REPEAT THE SAME MISTAKES.
RIGHT, IRORI-SAN?
I-I GET IT! LET GO OF ME!
WHY DO YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO EXAGGERATE THINGS?
OH MY, AND HERE I WAS OFFERING YOU SOME COMFORT.
Can it end!
Not fair!
I- I'll help with the special lesson!

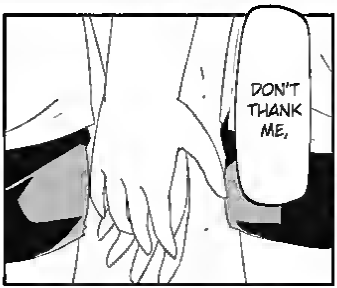
I WON... SOME-HOW.

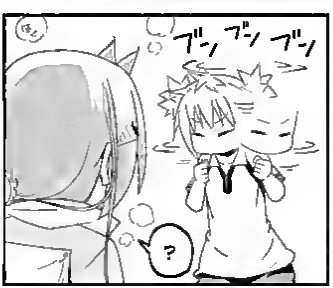


I WAS SO FULL OF MYSELF.
I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO BE THE ONE CHEERING HER UP BUT,
...

UM... I COULD ONLY WIN...
BECAUSE HANABI CALLED OUT TO ME, SO...

TH-THANKS, HANABI
IT ENDED UP BEING THE OTHER WAY AROUND.


DON'T THANK ME,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?

THEY WERE ALL GIVING ME THEIR SUPPORT!
THANK EVERY-BODY!

I WAS ONLY ABLE TO HELP YOU
BECAUSE THEY WERE HERE!
I SEE.
...
GOOD JOB,
HO-KUTO!

...SOMEONE'S THERE TO CATCH THEM.
Water!
WHENEVER SOMEONE TRIPS...
1!!
THAT'S WHAT A TEAM IS ALL ABOUT.
I'LL WIPE YOUR SWEAT!
GOOD JOB!
GOOD JOB!
MAKE SURE YOU REHY-DRATE PRO-PERLY!
THAT WAS A GREAT MATCH!
THE BEST FRIEND IN THE WORLD, THEN...
...
IF HANABI IS
SUZUMEGAHARA IS
THE BEST TEAM IN THE WORLD!

ONEE-SAMA HANKO